

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 EUR-10 IO-03 NSC-10 NSCE-00

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 PM-03 DODE-00 DPW-01

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5566

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 14125

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, VS

SUBJECT: MR 3 WEEKLY SITREP - JULY 29 - AUGUST 4, 1973

FOLLOWING MSG REC FROM AMCONSUG CAN THO ON AUG 4 ACTION EMBASSY
SAIGON INFO USDAO SAIGON USSAG NKP REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO:

C O N F I D E N T I A L BIEN HOA 0360

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, VS

SUBJECT: MR 3 WEEKLY SITREP-JULY 29-AUGUST 4, 1973

1. WAR COOLED SOMEWHAT IN MR 3 IN WEEK ENDING 0800 AUGUST 3,
WITH 160 CLASHES REPORTED COMPARED WITH 185 PREVIOUS WEEK.
THERE WERE 46 GROUND ATTACKS, 65 ATTACKS BY FIRE (SIX OVER 20
ROUNDS), ONE COMBINED FIRE AND GROUND ATTACK, 11 SMALL ARMS
HARRASSMENTS, 28 DETONATIONS OF MINES AND GRENADES (10 CIVILIANS),
THREE ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRINGS, TWO RAILROAD INTERDICTIONS, ONE
ABDUCTION, ONE REPORTED AIR STRIKE NEAR PHU GIAO, AND
ONE COMMUNIST CONFISCATION OF TWO HAND TILLING MACHINES.
BINH DUONG HAD 45 OF THE CLASHES; LONG KHANH HAD 25,
HAU NGHIA 20, PHUOC LONG 16, BINH LONG 15, GIA DINH 10, TAY
NINH NINE, LONG AN EIGHT, BIENHOA SIX, PHUOC TUY FXUR, RUNG
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SAT SPECIAL ZONE TWO, AND NONE IN BINH TUY.

2. FIGHTING IN BINH DUONG PROVINCE DIED DOWN SOMEWHAT AFTER ARVN 18TH DIVISION'S DECISIVE VICTORY OVER NVA 165TH REGIMENT JULY 27-28. ROAD BETWEEN PHU CUONG AND PHU GIAO HAS SINCE BEEN OPEN TO BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN TRAFFIC. BUT NVA 209TH AND 141ST REGIMENTS STILL HAVE INTERPROVINCIAL ROUTE 1A BLOCKED BETWEEN PHU GIAO AND DONG XOAI. THUS AFTER NEARLY FOUR WEEKS BLOODY FIGHTING, SITUATION ON THE GROUND IS ABOUT THE SAME AS BEFORE THE ARVN 5TH LAUNCHED ITS 1A CLEARING OPERATION. ON AUGUST 2 AND 3, 18TH DIVISION AND SOME RF ELEMENTS BEGAN SWEEP OPERATION A FEW KILOMETERS NORTH AND NORTHEAST OF PHU CUONG TO CLEAR OUT ADDITIONAL COMMUNIST UNITS THOUGHT TO HAVE INFILTRATED THERE RECENTLY FROM THE WEST. MR3 COMMANDERS ARE EXULTANT ABOUT THE 18TH'S SUCCESS, BUT THEY HAVE NO IMMEDIATE PLAN TO FOLLOW UP BY ATTACKING NORTH OF PHU GIAO AGAIN.

3. ONE HUNDRED ARVN TRUCKS FILLED WITH RICE AND OTHER MILITARY AND CIVILIAN SUPPLIES ARE SAID TO BE EN ROUTE TO SONG BE-PHUOC BINH AREA OF PHUOC LONG PROVINCE IN 900 KM TRIP FROM SAIGON VIA NHA TRANG, BAN ME THUOT AND DUC PHONG. PHUOC LONG PROVINCE CHIEF COL. LUU YEM ARRANGED THIS EXPENSIVE WAY TO FEED HIS PEOPLE BECAUSE OF CONTINUING DELAYS IN OPENING 1A, AND UNCERTAINTY OF RESUPPLY BY AIR TO PHUOC BINH AIRFIELD, WHICH IS BEING ROCKETED WHENEVER AN AIRPLANE LANDS. COL. YEM FEARS THAT HIS PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY MONTAGNARDS, WILL LEAVE GVN CONTROL FOR THEIR NATIVE HOMES IN COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED BO DUC DISTRICT IF HE CANT PROVIDE FOOD. AS OF 1800 AUGUST 3, NONE OF THE TRUCKS HAD YET ARRIVED IN SONG BE AND NO ONE IN MR3 KNEW WHERE ANY OF THEM WERE.

4. COMMUNISTS IN PHUOC LONG REPORTEDLY HAVE SENT COL. YEM A LETTER OFFERING TO STOP MORTARING PHUOC BINH AIRFIELD IF HE'LL GIVE THEM BACK NATIONAL HIGHWAY 14 BETWEEN DONG XOAI AND ROUTE 311. MEANWHILE, PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN TRAVELLING ON HIGHWAY 14 REPORT THAT THE 73RD AND 84TH RANGERS ARE INTERSPERSED WITH COMMUNIST UNITS ON THE ROAD, AND THAT COMMUNISTS ARE SAYING THAT THEY HAVE WORKED OUT ACCOMMODATION WITH 73RD RANGER CO TO MINIMIZE CONTACTS AND CASUALTIES.

5. GVN EFFORTS TO REPAIR AND OPEN RAILROAD EAST FROM XUAN LOC TO BINH TUY AND PHAN THIET ARE MEETING DETERMINED COMMUNIST RESISTENCE. COMMUNISTS ARE MORTARING 64TH RANGERS WHO ARE PROTECTING REPAIRMEN, AND IN EARLY HOURS OF AUGUST 1 THEY SIMULTANEOUSLY SABOTAGED RAILROAD BOTH 15 KMS WEST AND 7 KMS
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EAST OF XUAN LOC. 18TH DIVISION CG BG DAO CAN DO LITTLE TO HELP OUT BECAUSE HIS TROOPS ARE SPREAD OVER INTO EASTERN BINH DUONG AND DOWN IN SOUTHERN LONG KHANH AND NORTHERN PHUOC TUY ALONG INTERPROVINCIAL ROUTE 2. LONG KHANH PROVINCE CHIEF COL. TRUONG HAS TO PROVIDE BASE SECURITY FOR BASES 18TH HAS LEFT BEHIND, AND ALTHOUGH HE SAYS HIS PEOPLE LIKE THE RAILROAD, HE CLAIMS HE CANNOT OPEN IT TO THE BINH TUY BORDER WITHOUT AT LEAST AN ADDITIONAL RANGER BATTALION. MR3 CG MINH IS DISTINCTLY

UNETHUSIASTIC ABOUT ALLOCATING ADDITIONAL TROOPS TO GUARD THE RAILROAD OVER A ROUTE WHICH IS UNNECESSARY BECAUSE OF THE GOOD HIGHWAYS, AND NOT COST-EFFECTIVE IN PEACETIME.

6. BRITISH COUNTERINSURGENCY GURU SIR ROBERT THOMPSON, VISITING MR3 AUGUST 1, FOUND MR3 CG MINH AND OTHER TOP COMMANDERS REASONABLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT NEAR FUTURE IN SVN, ALTHOUGH THEY BELIEVED PRG ULTIMATELY TENDS TO LAUNCH ANOTHER OFFENSIVE, PERHAPS IN SIX TO TWELVE MONTHS. (COMMENT: LAST WEEK MINH WAS SAYING IT WOULD BE TWO YEARS. FACT IS, MR3 HAS NO IDEA WHATEVER WHEN THE COMMUNISTS WILL ATTACK, AND WE OFFER THEIR ESTIMATES ONLY AS EVIDENCE OF THEIR CURRENT MOOD. END COMMENT).

7. RVNAF MR3 COMMANDERS ARE WATCHING CAMBODIA WITH CONSIDERABLE CONCERN, FEARING THAT THE DOWNFALL OF THE GKR WOULD RELEASE SOME NVA TROOPS FOR SVN DUTY. MINH OMINOUSLY NOTED THAT "WE WILL NOT LET THIS HAPPEN". HE DID NOT SAY WHAT GVN MIGHT DO IF SITUATION IN CAMBODIA BECOMES CRITICAL, BUT POSSIBLE STRAW IN WIND WAS VISIT TO TAY NINH JULY 26 BY CAMBOESAN AMBASSADOR, WHO ASKED FOR TAY NINH PROVINCE CHIEF'S SUPPORT FOR POSSIBLE FANK OPERATION TO OPEN HIGHWAY 1 TO SVAY RIENG PROVINCE TOWN. TAY NINH PROVINCE CHIEF WAS ALL FOR IT, ALTHOUGH DECISION ON SUCH AN OPERATION WOULD OF COURSE, BE MADE IN SAIGON. COMMENT: PERHAPS GVN WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT ANTI-COMMUNIST KHMER IN ATTEMPT TO CONTROL SOME CAMBODIAN BORDER PROVINCES TO DENY THEIR USE AS SANCTUARY TO NVA/VC, IF PRESENT GKR FAILS. END COMMENT.

WALKINSHAW
MARTIN

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